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Statement submitted by United Cities and Local Governments, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

1. Lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals have galvanized political commitment, influenced debate, provided a focus for advocacy and improved the monitoring of development projects. But the assessment of the Millennium Development Goals has repeatedly shown that, in many domains, the poorest and the most marginalized are often passed over.

The Millennium Development Goals have also been criticized with regard to a deficient ownership, a simplistic vision of development, problems with equity and an emphasis on ends to the exclusion of means. Part of the failure to address inequalities in the Millennium Development Goals has been related to the lack of attention to urban dynamics, when more than half of humanity is now living in urban areas and poverty is increasingly urbanized.

The Millennium Development Goals failed to address some issues, in particular linked to population dynamics, as growing urbanization. The only target in the Millennium Development Goals which refers to the urban situation is the significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers (by 2020). The numbers have been met but without reducing slum populations as they have continued to grow. This is especially significant for local and regional governments in view of their leading role in the governance of urban areas in many countries.

Even if most of the Millennium Development Goals depend directly or indirectly on the capacity of local and regional governments to deliver services, their involvement in implementing the Millennium Development Goals remains under-recognized and under-supported. Since the drafting of the Millennium Development Goals, the world has transformed from predominantly rural to more than 50% urban. Furthermore multiple crises have emerged, environmental with raising climate change impacts and disasters, economic and financial challenging existing social models.

The new development agenda needs to be rooted in the needs of people at the local level (a bottom-up process) through an iterative process involving regular and inclusive participation of all stakeholders.

2. Build on the Millennium Development Goals and "finish the job"

It will be important that the new framework not be articulated in terms of partial achievements. Targets should support universal access to basic needs, and promote zero exposure to the worst forms of risk and hazards.

The new agenda should not be based only on economic growth but also on sustainable social, environmental and cultural development objectives; the agenda should be supported by universal rights, promote the wellbeing of the people and take into account new actors of development. Poverty and sustainability needs to be tackled with a multi-dimensional approach, building synergies between different goals and targets, both in the developed and developing world, promoting a high degree of policy coherence at the global, national but also sub-national levels, defining shared responsibilities and a more balanced approach among all levels of government and development partners.

Concrete but flexible goals, promoting inter-sector and territorial development approaches. The global framework should be flexible enough to allow for

adjustments according to regional, national and local needs. Policies addressing poverty/inequalities, and economic and environment sustainability need to develop cross-cutting approaches, anchored in specific territories (e.g. a region, a city, a neighbourhood) where marginalized groups and extreme poverty are concentrated. There is strong evidence from many nations that local approaches have a central role in reducing inequalities, giving voice to the poor and most vulnerable and promoting more sustainable patterns of development.

Identify the how and who (drivers and enablers). A number of critics feel the Millennium Development Goals do not go far enough in identifying approaches for achieving the ends. Although some Millennium Development Goals targets are as much about means as ends, the overall emphasis is clearly on the "what" more than the "how" or the "who".

The new framework should build on the Rio+20 outcome document that recognised the need for effective governance at local and sub-national levels in advancing sustainable development. The involvement of sub-national institutions and actors cannot be limited to implementing actions; they should be active partners in defining policies, planning, implementing and monitoring.

3. Content of the Post-2015 agenda

Criteria to set targets and indicators under the 17 Goals: simple, jargon-free and easy to communicate and understand; energising to people, institutions and governments; mutually supportive; ambitious but achievable; applicable in diverse conditions and countries (but flexible to be adapted at the country level).

Concerns with data: The framework of the goals tends to encourage a focus on national averages, and the United Nations task team acknowledges that progress has not been well monitored at sub-national levels. There is a widely recognized need for disaggregated statistics to identify the most disadvantaged, and to monitor progress on goals and targets.

A new goal on sustainable cities: if cities host 50% of the world population and this will soon increase to 2/3, leading the United Nations Secretary-General to say that "Our Struggle for Global Sustainability Will Be Won or Lost in Cities", the post-2015 agenda should define more specific targets and indicators for urban areas. More sustainable cities will be crucial to develop more balanced links with hinterlands. A cross-sector approach in urban areas should include: reducing inequalities (including gender inequalities, universal access to basic services, improving the quality of life of slum dwellers), environmental sustainability (transport, building standards, renewable energy, carbon gas emissions), safe cities (living without fear of violence) and improved governance (participation of the population, with specific attention to the poor, in local governance, strengthened capacity of local authorities to lead pro-poor policies, including participative strategic planning).

Reduction of inequalities: as hunger and nutrition is one of the more critical dimensions of inequalities, ensure food security needs to be at the top of the agenda in eradicating extreme poverty. Universal access to basic services (health, quality education, drinkable water, sanitation, emergency services, public transports) and social protection with special attention to specific groups (extreme poor, children, single women heads of households, older people, persons with disabilities), are also at the core of reducing poverty and exclusion. In addition specific actions to protect women and girls from violence, exclusion and abuse will be crucial. Slum

upgrading and secure land tenure also need to be included as specific targets, as dec nt housing is a basic right for all human being. Local and Regional Governments are in a unique position to identify pockets of poverty and marginalized groups, and design specific programs. In support of this goal, provisions to eliminate all forms of discrimination (gender, age, caste, race, ethnic, religion, migrant, etc.), and achieve gender equality should be considered overarching principles to support this goal.

Environmental sustainability: exposure to unsafe waste, water, air pollution, the harmful effects of high population density, chemical and agricultural hazards and other environmental hazards are unequally distributed, disproportionately affecting poorer populations. Climate change is also affecting poorer parts of the world most severely, and it is the poor and disadvantaged who are particularly impacted; many developing countries are facing the "worst and first" effects of climate related disasters. Local and Regional Governments are one of the main drivers to cope with these challenges as, in many countries, they have direct responsibilities in water (resource protection, distribution), waste management (collection, treatment and recycling), in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting the use of renewable energy sources (e.g. through public transport and adequate building standards), or in supporting planning for land and urban management (reduce ecological footprints, urban sprawl, reforestation, etc.). As acknowledged in Rio +20, local participatory planning should be recognized as an "enabler" to adapt to climate change and to reduce the impact of increasing natural disasters and the related impact on human lives, infrastructure and economic activities.

Economic development: supporting and shaping more pro-poor oriented Local Economic Development policies and rules, including non-discriminatory practices to support youth, women, persons with disabilities and economic disadvantaged groups, both in terms of creating decent jobs, an enabling environment for economic activities (e.g. for the informal sector) and promoting innovative economic alternatives (e.g. urban agriculture) can also be catalyst for development, building on local solidarity networks, encouraging partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

Governance: national plans for poverty reduction should be articulated with local and regional plans and promote a better intergovernmental coordination and harmonization (multi-level governance). Specific support should be considered for local and regional governments to develop sustainable pro-poor policies and to ensure they have the means to deliver basic service (base on the principle of subsidiarity). As the level of government closer to the communities, a specific space in regional and local decision making processes should be promoted for civil society and private sector to play an active role in ensuring that actions and resources can be effectively targeted and optimally used to reach the poor and most marginalized groups, e.g. through participatory planning and budgeting (improved accountability). A broader participation in decision making processes is supportive of a more inclusive and sustainable development.

4. Implementation

The United Nations system should remain central in leading the efforts towards a coordinated and coherent definition of post-2015 agenda, as well as in the implementation of the new framework. The General Assembly is the most appropriate overarching body to provide guidance and promote coherence. The role of the United Nations and the agencies responsible for global coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the new framework should be enhanced through the constitution of a more robust Economic and Social Council, with a stronger, more institutionalized role for the Major Groups and stakeholders. However, in the shorter term, the "high level political forum" which resulted from the Rio+20 outcomes, can undertake the following tasks:

(a) Provide political leadership and recommendations;

(b) Provide a dynamic platform for regular dialogue and for stocktaking and agenda-setting;

(c) Follow up (monitoring) and review progress in the implementation of development agenda commitments, ensuring the transparency and accountability of the process, and the engagement of all stakeholders;

(d) Improve cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on development programs and policies; and

(e) Promote transparency and implementation by further enhancing the consultative role and participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders at the international level in order to make better use of their expertise.

Local authorities and other major groups support the creation of the high level political forum on sustainable development and call for an institution that builds on the strengths of the Commission on Sustainable Development while addressing its weaknesses, reporting directly to the General Assembly and the Council but not subsidiary to the Council. We also support a yearly two-week period for review and implementation, in addition to the hosting of a 2-3 day high-level segment of the Council. The forum must adopt and build on the Commission on Sustainable Development rules and procedures, including on Major Groups and other stakeholder participation as opposed to the more limited participation within both the Council and the General Assembly.

Partnership and coordination: the achievement of the development agenda will not be possible without the participation of all relevant stakeholders, through innovative multi-stakeholders partnerships and under differentiated modalities. These broad partnerships will require coordinated efforts at different levels (global, regional, national, sub-national) on the part of international institutions, states, local and regional authorities, parliamentarians, civil society organizations and the private sector, with a clarification of responsibilities (e.g. the implementation, monitoring and evaluation), and incentives to participate in the agenda.

This partnerships and coordination should be built within a clear global governance framework, ensuring a broader ownership and accountability. To contribute to this end, a building block on "governance" in the post-2015 agenda should include specific support to institutions and stakeholders at different levels.